

Aging and Adult Services Administration (AASA) Home and Community Services Regional Offices

Region 1

Spokane, Grant, Okanogan, Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Lincoln, Ferry, Stevens, Whitman, and Pend Oreille Counties

1-800-459-0421

Region 2

Yakima, Kittitas, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin Counties

1-877-389-3013

Region 3

Snohomish, Skagit, Island, San Juan, and Whatcom Counties

1-800-487-0416

Region 4

King County

1-866-221-4909

Region 5

Pierce County

1-800-442-5129

Kitsap County

1-888-833-4925

Region 6

Thurston, Mason, Lewis, Clallam, Jefferson, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Skamania, Klickitat, and Clark Counties

1-877-734-6277



Aging &
Adult Services
Administration

Partners Against Adult Abuse



A Reporting Guide For Mandatory Reporters



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Aging and Adult Services Administration (AASA)

Abuse of vulnerable adults happens more often than any of us would like to admit. It is serious, and it can happen in any setting.

All of us, as responsible citizens, must help to prevent and stop abuse, neglect, abandonment, and exploitation of vulnerable adults. Report suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities.

Some professionals are required by law to report suspected abuse. **You must report suspected abuse, if you are a . . .**

- DSHS employee;
- Law enforcement officer;
- Employee of a social service, mental health, or welfare agency;
- Employee of home care, hospice, home health, adult day care, adult day health agency;
- Owner or employee of a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home;
- School employee;
- Health care provider subject to Title 18 RCW (such as a nurse or doctor);
- Contracted Individual Provider caring for a DSHS client.

You must report immediately if you have reasonable cause to believe that a vulnerable adult is being harmed.
You do not need proof of that harm.
You must report suspected physical and sexual assault to both law enforcement and DSHS.

A vulnerable adult is:

- someone over the age of 60 unable to care for themselves;
- an adult living in a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home;
- an adult with a developmental disability;
- an adult with a legal guardian;
- an adult receiving personal care services in their own or family's home.

The legal reference mandating reporting of suspected abuse, neglect and financial exploitation is in Chapter 74.34, RCW.

Ordering Information

To order more copies of this brochure, send a written request to DSHS Warehouse with brochure name, publication number (DSHS 810[x]), and the quantity you want. There is no charge for the brochures.

P.O. Box 45816,
Olympia, WA 98504-5816
FAX: 360/664-0597
E-mail: DSHSFPW@dshs.wa.gov

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**You can find this brochure
and other publications
on the AASA website. Visit the site at:**
www.aasa.dshs.wa.gov

Abuse is a willful action or inaction that causes harm. It includes physical, mental, and sexual abuse (including non-consensual contact or consensual contact with a caregiver).

Signs of physical abuse:

- unexplained bruises, welts, black eyes, wounds, or fractures;
- multiple injuries in various stages of healing;
- sudden changes in behavior (adult is fearful or depressed or engages in self-destructive behavior);
- the caregiver refuses to allow visitors;
- person is in restraints or locked in a room;
- missing patches of hair or hemorrhaging below the scalp;
- the person reports abuse.

Signs of mental abuse:

- person is emotionally upset, agitated, withdrawn, non-communicative, depressed, or nonresponsive;
- caregiver refuses to allow visitors or does not let the person participate in family or community events;
- the person reports abuse.

Signs of sexual abuse:

- bruising around breasts and/or genital area;
- an unexplained venereal disease;
- soiled underclothes or bedding;
- the person reports being sexually abused;
- sudden change in behavior.

Abandonment is leaving the vulnerable adult without means of caring for self.

Signs of abandonment:

- adult is deserted in a public place or in his or her own home;
- the adult reports being abandoned.

Neglect is the failure to maintain the health and safety of a vulnerable adult.

Signs of neglect and self-neglect:

- dehydration;
- malnutrition;
- untreated injuries, or unattended health problems, including poor dental health;
- person appears unclean and/or poorly groomed;
- person lying in feces or urine, or a strong odor of feces or urine;
- unsafe living conditions.

Exploitation is pressuring or manipulating a vulnerable adult to act differently than they have in the past or to perform services benefiting others. Exploitation of a vulnerable adult may be financial or personal.

Signs of exploitation:

- unexplained or unusual use of bank cards or sudden transfer of money;
- forged signature on checks;
- disappearance of possessions;
- overcharge for home repairs or other work;
- signs of telephone or mail soliciting (magazines, prize items);
- use of home or possessions for illegal activities.

Reporting

If you think someone may be in danger or needs urgent help, call 911 or your local law enforcement immediately.

Where do you report?

If the person you suspect is being abused lives in a

- Nursing home
- Boarding home (including assisted living)
- Adult family home

Call the DSHS Complaint Resolution Unit at: **1-800-562-6078.**

If the person you think is being abused lives in:

- Their own or family’s home or apartment

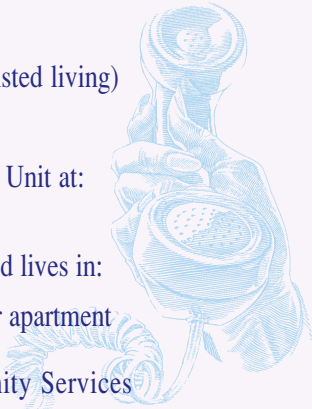
Call the DSHS Home and Community Services (HCS) Office in the area where they live in Washington State. The HCS numbers can be found on the back of this brochure.

When you report, you will be asked:

- The name, address, apartment number, age, and telephone number of the adult you think is being harmed.
- Any information about the circumstances.
- The name, address, relationship and telephone number of the person you think is **causing** the harm.
- Names of other people who can provide information about the situation.
- Any safety concerns you may have.
- Your name and address.

Important to know

- People who report in good faith have immunity from liability.
- The reporter’s name remains confidential (unless the reporter gives permission to release it, there is a judicial proceeding or DSHS forwards a potential crime report to law enforcement).
- Client information is confidential (public disclosure regulations may apply).
- The vulnerable adult will be interviewed in private.
- If living in their own home or family’s home, the vulnerable adult must consent to services and be informed of the right to refuse or withdraw from services. DSHS cannot remove an adult from their residence or place an adult in a different residence against their wishes.
- DSHS will report a suspected crime to law enforcement.
- Any protective services will be provided in the least restrictive environment available and appropriate to the vulnerable adult.



IT IS THE POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES THAT NO PERSON, BECAUSE OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, AGE, RELIGION, CREED, OR DISABILITY, SHALL BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN ANY ASPECT OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.